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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 1634  
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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ AUG 6211  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 6338  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 000769

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/12/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [CI](#)  
SUBJECT: FM FERNANDEZ ON UNASUR -- GREATER COLOMBIAN  
PARTICIPATION WILL HELP MODERATES

REF: STATE 82581

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Paul Simons. Reason: 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary. On August 11, Foreign Minister Fernandez suggested to the Ambassador that UNASUR moderates can balance out the populists and hold UNASUR together in spite of tension over Colombia. However, Colombia needs to participate in UNASUR at a senior level to effectively explain its position. He said that Venezuelan President Chavez treated Ecuadorian President Correa poorly at the August 10 UNASUR meeting in Quito. He added that UNASUR has not decided whether the next high-level meeting will be between presidents or foreign ministers. End summary.

¶2. (C) On August 11, the Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Mariano Fernandez to review the August 10 meeting of Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) heads of state in Quito, where Chile turned over the rotating presidency to Ecuador. Fernandez stated that UNASUR was in good shape thanks to Chilean management but asked the open-ended question of what happens next. He said that Chile hopes to slowly build UNASUR as an effective institution to promote regional integration but is concerned that differing views within the region on Colombia could pull the organization apart.

¶3. (C) Fernandez only briefly touched upon the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) being negotiated between the United States and Colombia (reftel). Towards the end of the meeting he stated that Colombia had done a poor job of unveiling the concept to the region. From his comments it was clear that the region's reaction to the DCA was the focus of the UNASUR meeting in Quito.

¶4. (C) In the course of discussing the dynamics of the UNASUR meeting, Fernandez emphasized two points, the first explicitly and the second implicitly: 1) Colombia was represented in Quito by a Deputy Foreign Minister and needs to participate at a higher level in UNASUR meetings to effectively explain its position, and 2) that there is sufficient room and leadership for the moderate voices in UNASUR to balance the more strident voices.

¶5. (C) Fernandez said that he is seeking clarification on the next high-level UNASUR meeting. He said that Ecuador had planned to hold a meeting of Foreign Ministers and Defense Ministers on August 24, but it was not clear whether the

UNASUR members would go forward with the ministerial meeting or a presidential meeting in Argentina, as verbally proposed by Argentine President Fernandez.

¶16. (C) Fernandez commented on the performance and remarks of some of the participants at the August 10 UNASUR meeting:

-- Venezuelan President Chavez treated Ecuadorian President Correa poorly. (Note: this was evidently a reference to Chavez's interrupting Correa to make his "winds of war" statement after Chilean President Bachelet passed the UNASUR presidency to Correa.)

-- Paraguayan President Lugo was very good, particularly his statement that the regional leaders need to work together and not make accusations.

-- Argentine President Fernandez was "better than average."

-- Colombia argued that it is addressing transnational problems of organized crime and narcotrafficking.

-- Ecuador responded "well" to the Colombian statement by asserting that the problems identified by Colombia are being exported by Colombia.

¶17. (C) Fernandez made several general observations about four Southern Cone countries, with the implicit suggestion that these factors could affect how they react towards Colombia and the DCA:

-- Argentina has an issue with foreign troops.

-- Uruguay will frame matters from the optic of its own problems with Argentina.

-- Paraguay has performed well.

-- Brazil has its own issues (no further information).

¶18. (C) Fernandez also made the following statements about dynamics surrounding the UNASUR meeting:

-- He and the Peruvian Foreign Minister both urged Colombia to send a representative at a higher level than Deputy Foreign Minister. He added that "Peru can only serve as Colombia's lawyer once."

-- He pressed the Ecuadorians to ensure that the Colombian Deputy FM received appropriate treatment.

-- That he helped craft a relatively open-ended UNASUR Presidential Declaration. He said that he ended up working with his Ecuadorian, Venezuelan and Bolivian counterparts on the declaration and that other foreign ministers abandoned him the evening of August 9 for dinner and other activities.

¶19. (C) Comment. In his quick survey of the August 10 UNASUR meeting, Fernandez was attempting to assure the United States that Chile is ready to work with like-minded countries in UNASUR to maintain balance with UNASUR between moderates and populists, particularly on Colombia. Clearly he believes that Colombia will need to participate at a higher level to effectively explain its position, including the DCA.

SIMONS